

KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH
October 13th 2024
Complaining, Lamenting, Arguing with God

The Gathering of the People of God

WELCOME & GREETING

Last week, we considered Mrs Job, who, in her pain, told Mr Job to curse/bless God and die. This week, we sit with Mr Job as he wrestles with the eternal question of why these bad things are happening. Mr Job doesn't get an answer. We so often do not get an answer. However, there are times when we receive an answer that is no comfort at all. How might we respond?

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ

and the love of God

and the communion of the Holy Spirit

be with you all.

And also with you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge that this land is God's land, and God's Spirit dwells here.

We pay our respects to the elders, past, present and emerging of the Bidjegal people of the Eora nation who have cared for this land in time beyond our dreaming.

This land on which we live and move was and always will be Aboriginal Land.

KUC MISSION STATEMENT

Let us say together who we are.

We are a congregation

who welcome people of all cultures and lifestyles,

who create a safe place for the community

and who share the journey of life and faith.

CALL TO WORSHIP

The writer of psalm 22 cries out:

My God! My God,
why have you left me all alone?
Why are you so far from saving me—
so far from my anguished groans?

The writer of Mark's gospel tells us Jesus cried out the words of this psalm while he hung on the cross.

There are days that we, too, cry out in agony and lament because life can be so hard.

As we gather today, may you feel free to express the hurts you are carrying.

May you feel safe to set down your burdens.

May you feel secure in the knowledge that even in the bleakest hour, you are known and loved.

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

God is here **God is always here**

God is with us **God is always with us**

SING: Beauty for brokenness hope for despair - TIS 690

**Beauty for brokenness,
hope for despair,
Lord in the suffering,
this is our prayer,
bread for the children,
justice, joy, peace,
sunrise to sunset your kingdom increase.**

**Shelter for fragile lives,
cures for their ills,
work for the craftsmen,
trade for their skills;
land for the dispossessed,
rights for the weak,
voices to plead the cause of those who can't speak.**

**God of the poor,
friend of the weak,
give us compassion, we pray;**

**melt our cold hearts,
let tears fall like rain.
Come change our love from a spark to a flame.**

**Refuge from cruel wars,
havens from fear,
cities for sanctuary,
freedoms to share,
peace to the killing-fields,
scorched earth to green;
Christ for the bitterness, his cross for the pain.**

**Rest for the ravaged earth,
oceans and streams,
plundered and poisoned,
our future, our dreams.
Lord, end our madness,
carelessness, greed;
make us content with the things that we need.**

**God of the poor,
friend of the weak,
give us compassion, we pray;
melt our cold hearts,
let tears fall like rain.
Come change our love from a spark to a flame.**

**Lighten our darkness,
breathe on this flame,
until your justice burns
brightly again;
until the nations
learn of your ways,
seek your salvation and bring you their praise.**

**God of the poor,
friend of the weak,
give us compassion, we pray;
melt our cold hearts,
let tears fall like rain.
Come change our love from a spark to a flame.**

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OPENING PRAYER

Loving God, you see the trials that we face, you know the burdens that we carry. Be with us today as we allow a time of sadness, grief, and lament. Help us to know you are here, even in the darkest times.

Amen.

SING: Be still and know that I am God - Seasons 6-9

**Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am God.**

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PRAYER OF CONFESSION & DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

Gracious God,

there are times that, in our hurt, we have lashed out at others.

There are times that, in our hurt, we have ignored our own needs.

There are times that in our hurt, we have created more hurt.

We are sorry for this.

A time of silence.

Words of Grace

Come now and know that you are loved.
Come now and know that you are valued.

Come now and know God's peace.

Amen.

PEACE

The Service of the Word

BIBLE READINGS:

JOB 23:1-9 16-17

23Then Job answered: ²⁴"Today also my complaint is bitter; his hand is heavy despite my groaning. ³Oh, that I knew where I might

find him, that I might come even to his dwelling! ⁴I would lay my case before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. ⁵I would learn what he would answer me, and understand what he would say to me. ⁶Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power? No; but he would give heed to me. ⁷There an upright person could reason with him, and I should be acquitted forever by my judge.

⁸“If I go forward, he is not there; or backward, I cannot perceive him; ⁹on the left he hides, and I cannot behold him; I turn to the right, but I cannot see him.

¹⁶God has made my heart faint; the Almighty has terrified me; ¹⁷If only I could vanish in darkness, and thick darkness would cover my face!

PSALM 22:1-15

¹My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?

²O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest.

³Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.

⁴In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them.

⁵To you they cried, and were saved; in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.

⁶But I am a worm, and not human; scorned by others, and despised by the people.

⁷All who see me mock at me; they make mouths at me, they shake their heads;

⁸“Commit your cause to the LORD; let him deliver— let him rescue the one in whom he delights!”

⁹Yet it was you who took me from the womb; you kept me safe on my mother’s breast.

¹⁰On you I was cast from my birth, and since my mother bore me you have been my God.

¹¹Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.

¹²Many bulls encircle me, strong bulls of Bashan surround me;

¹³they open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion.

¹⁴I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast;

¹⁵my mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death.

MARK 10:17-31.

¹⁷As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ¹⁸Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. ¹⁹You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.’”²⁰He said to him, “Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.”²¹Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, “You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” ²²When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

²³Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” ²⁴And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” ²⁶They were greatly astounded and said to one another, “Then who can be saved?” ²⁷Jesus looked at them and said, “For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.”

²⁸Peter began to say to him, “Look, we have left everything and followed you.” ²⁹Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, ³⁰who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields with persecutions—and in

the age to come eternal life. ³¹But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first."

REFLECTION – Richard.

From Moira Laidlaw Liturgies.

There are some weeks when one wishes that the lectionary - the set readings for the week could perhaps come up with a better - much better - selection of readings. One is supposed to be challenged by the difficult readings and I can assure you, the challenge this week is immense. I remember reading somewhere that prudent preachers avoid this week's gospel - not to mention the reading from Hebrews.

In relation to the gospel, a prudent preacher might focus on the rich young ruler whom our Lord looked on and loved. But how on earth does one address the words of Jesus "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."

One cannot back away from such words, so first - some biblical background...Little wonder that the disciples were amazed at Jesus' words, that they were 'exceedingly astonished'. Not only because it seemed from his words that no one could enter the kingdom. What complicated their effort to understand was a powerful Jewish tradition, part of the very air that they breathed: wealth was a mark, a sign, of God's favour. In Job 42 we can read how Job was blessed when God gave him '14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1000 yoke of oxen, and a 1000 she-asses'. The Lord blessed this God-fearing man by giving him twice as much as he had before. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were all rich men, for God had enriched those he loved. Wealth was believed to be a part of life's peace, life's fullness. In days of famine, the Psalmist sings, the blameless have abundance. If the people obeyed God, Moses promised they would prosper mightily in a land where they would lack nothing.

Not that everyone who was rich was therefore blessed by God - after all, Isaiah warns, "Woe to those who add house to house and join field to field, until everywhere belongs to them and they are the sole inhabitants of the land." *Isaiah 5:8 The Jerusalem Bible* Woe to those who forgot that the source of their wealth was God. But many of the Psalms proclaim that if you did fear and really loved God, you would surely be blessed with the good things of the earth.

Now what did Jesus say to that revered tradition? He had "nowhere to lay his head" and lived off the hospitality of others - the women of Galilee, the sisters of Bethany, the tax man in the tree, Zacchaeus. Jesus condemned wealth in harsh terms. Woe to you who are rich... It is to the

poor that the kingdom of God belongs... the message of so many of Jesus' parables - the rich fool who lays up treasures for himself, and is not rich towards God...the rich man who died and went to Hell, while poor Lazarus was carried off by angels. And Jesus' words to any who would follow - "Anyone of you who does not bid farewell to all that he has cannot be a disciple of mine."

This is confronting language indeed, but there is another side to it - a side to Jesus that makes us hesitate over his harsher words. As far as we know, he never told Lazarus or his sisters, Martha and Mary, to give up all that they had. He did not announce to Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea that they were excluded from the kingdom. Rich Zacchaeus proclaimed, "Behold, Lord, I give to the poor half of my goods"; not all, just half. And still Jesus told him "Today salvation has come to this house..." Jesus mirrors John the Baptist's reply to the crowds about what to do if you have two coats - give away - one - not both!

Eduard Schweizer in his great book *JESUS*,¹ has an excellent description of Jesus as the title of one of the chapters in the book: 'Jesus: the man who fits no formula.'²

That description certainly fits concerning riches, because there is the radical Jesus and there is the moderate Jesus. There is the Jesus for whom wealth is totally linked with evil and there is the Jesus who counsels a wise use of possessions to help the less fortunate. There is the Jesus who tells some people to give it all away, and there is the Jesus who advises others to share what they have. There is the Jesus who forces you to choose between money and God, and there is the Jesus who loves a rich young ruler who keeps both his wealth and God's commandments.

What then does it all mean for us today? I believe that the radical Jesus and the moderate Jesus has something to say to us here and now. On the one hand, the radical Jesus must never cease to challenge us. Today's gospel reading illustrates how nothing, absolutely nothing, should take precedence over Christ in yours or my life, his right to rule in yours or my heart. But history, our history, tells us that there is a peril in any possession - whether it is an adult's stocks and shares or a child's favourite teddy bear, whether it is health or wealth, political power or homespun wisdom; children or home - whatever we "own". The danger? Simply that it's ours and it can become the centre of our existence. It can organise our lives, manipulate us, stifles us...when that happens, Christ takes second place. We don't listen, we don't hear his invitation or his command: to care and to share, to let go. The radical Jesus poses a timeless question - what rules my life - the camel or the kingdom?

On the other hand, the moderate Jesus fixes our eye on something splendidly positive. What the moderate Jesus tells us is that we are to use our gifts as he invites or commands us to use them. To some he may say: Give all you have to the poor and come, follow me naked. To others, share what you possess, use it for your brothers and sisters. Employ your power for peace, your wisdom to reconcile, your knowledge to open horizons, your compassion to heal, your hope to destroy despair, your very weakness to give strength. Remember your most precious possession is yourself. Give it away, lavishly.

To do that, we dare not stare at the eye of the needle; we must look at Jesus. If we look too long at the needle's eye, trying to figure out how to get our personal camel through it, we may despair. How can we ever reconcile our riches- no matter how modest - with God's kingdom, or our possessions with Christ's command to let go? We can become convinced that it is indeed as impossible as a camel squeezing through the eye of a needle.

The disciples were also perplexed at Jesus' difficult teaching, but Jesus answers them and us - he looks upon us as one who knows us better than we know ourselves, and he speaks the grace-filled word: with men and women, Jesus says, "It is impossible, but not with God, for all things are possible with God."

Remember the rich man's original question to Jesus? Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? Our next hymn spells out in detail our possible response to Jesus' invitation... "Take my life, and let it be consecrated Lord to Thee"

SING: Take my life and let it be - TIS 599

**Take my life, and let it be
consecrated, Lord, to thee.
Take my moments and my days,
let them flow in ceaseless praise.**

**Take my hands, and let them move
at the impulse of thy love.
Take my feet, and let them be
swift and beautiful for thee.**

**Take my voice, and let me sing
always, only for my King.
Take my lips, and let them be
filled with messages from thee.**

Take my silver and my gold,

**nothing, Lord, would I withhold.
Take my intellect and use
every power as thou shalt choose.**

**Take my will and make it thine,
it shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart, it is thine own;
it shall be thy royal throne.**

**Take my love: my Lord, I pour
at thy feet its treasure-store.
Take myself, and I will be
ever, only, all for thee.**

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OFFERING

We offer these gifts as a sacrifice. May they be used with wisdom for your work in this place. Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS

Loving God,

there is so much suffering in the world today.

Hear us as we pray.

For those suffering the impacts of war and conflict,

have mercy, we pray.

For those suffering from racism, colonialism, and other injustices,

have mercy, we pray.

For those suffering from misogyny and patriarchal systems,

have mercy, we pray.

For those suffering from homophobia and transphobia,

have mercy, we pray.

For those suffering because they have lost children,

have mercy, we pray.

For those suffering because they are not able to bear children,

have mercy, we pray.

For those suffering because they have lost family, friends, and loved ones,

have mercy, we pray.

You might add stanzas that fit your worship community.

Let us have a time of silence for all those suffering who have not been mentioned. We offer these prayers.

Gracious God, **have mercy, we pray.**

Loving God, **have mercy, we pray.**

Creator God, **have mercy, we pray.**

Amen.

COMMUNION

SING: For everyone born, a place at the table - Seasons 4-14)

**For everyone born, a place at the table,
for everyone born, clean water and bread,
a shelter, a space, a safe place for growing,
for everyone born, a star overhead,
and God will delight when we are creators
of justice and joy, compassion and peace:
yes, God will delight when we are creators
of justice, justice and joy!**

**For woman and man, a place at the table,
revising the roles, deciding the share,
with wisdom and grace, dividing the power,
for woman and man, a system that's fair,
and God will delight when we are creators
of justice and joy, compassion and peace:
yes, God will delight when we are creators
of justice, justice and joy!**

**For young and for old, a place at the table,
a voice to be heard, a part in the song,
the hands of a child in hands that are wrinkled,
for young and for old, the right to belong,
and God will delight when we are creators
of justice and joy, compassion and peace:
yes, God will delight when we are creators
of justice, justice and joy!**

**For just and unjust, a place at the table,
abuser, abused, with need to forgive,
in anger, in hurt, a mindset of mercy,
for just and unjust, a new way to live,
and God will delight when we are creators
of justice and joy, compassion and peace:
yes, God will delight when we are creators
of justice, justice and joy!**

**For everyone born, a place at the table,
to live without fear, and simply to be,
to work, to speak out, to witness and worship,
for everyone born, the right to be free,
and God will delight when we are creators
of justice and joy, compassion and peace:
yes, God will delight when we are creators
of justice, justice and joy!**

**For gay and for straight, a place at the table,
a covenant shared, a welcoming space,
a rainbow of race and gender and colour,
for gay and for straight, the chalice of grace,
and God will delight when we are creators
of justice and joy, compassion and peace:
yes, God will delight when we are creators
of justice, justice and joy!**

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Invitation

The table of bread and wine is now to be made ready.

It is the table of company with Jesus, and all who love him.

It is the table of sharing with the poor of the world, with whom Jesus identified himself.

It is the table of communion with the earth, in which Christ became incarnate.

So come to this table, you who have much faith and you who would like to have more;

you who have been here often and you who have not been for a while;

you who have tried to follow Jesus, and you who have failed;

Come.

It is Christ who invites us to meet him here.

Let us pray.

Loving God, through your goodness we have this bread and wine to offer,

which earth has given and human hands have made.

May we know your presence in the sharing of this bread, so that we may know your touch in all bread, all matter.

We celebrate the life that Jesus has shared among his community through the centuries, and shares with us now.

Made one in Christ, and one with each other, we offer these gifts and with them ourselves, a single, holy, living sacrifice.

Amen.

The Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

We offer you praise, dear God, and hearts lifted high, for in the communion of your love

Christ comes close to us and we come close to Christ.

Therefore with the whole realm of nature around us, with earth, sea, and sky, we sing to you.

With the angels of light who envelop us, with all the saints before and beside us, with brothers and sisters, east and west, we sing to you.

And with our loved ones, separate from us now, who yet in this mystery are close to us, we join in the song of your unending greatness:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is our brother Jesus, who walks with us the road of our world's suffering and who is known to us in the breaking of bread.

On the night of his arrest Jesus took bread and having blessed it he broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, saying,

This is my body, given to you.

In the same way he took wine and having given thanks for it, he poured it out and gave the cup to his disciples, saying,

This cup is the new relationship with God, sealed with my blood.

Take this and share it. I shall drink wine with you next in the coming Kingdom of God.

Hear us, O Christ, and breathe your Spirit upon us, and upon this bread and wine.

May they become for us your body, vibrant with your life, healing, renewing, and make us whole.

And as the bread and wine which we now eat and drink are changed into us, may we be changed again into you, bone of your bone, flesh of your flesh, loving and caring in the world.

As Christ has taught us let us pray:

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us in the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours

now and for ever. Amen.

The Communion

He whose table was open to all is now present in this bread.

He whose word welcomed friend and stranger offers friendship through this cup.

With people everywhere we affirm

God's goodness at the heart of humanity,

planted more deeply than all that is wrong.

The gifts of God for the people of God...

Thanks be to God.

Christ is the bread of life,
food for healing and wholeness.

Christ is the cup of hope,
wellspring of resurrection life.

The gifts of God for the people of God.

May we who share these gifts

be found in Christ

and Christ in us.

Share the Meal

Prayer

Living God, in this sacrament we have shared in your eternal kingdom.
May we who taste this mystery forever serve you in faith, hope, and love.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.

**Glory to God, whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more
than we can ask or imagine. Glory to God from generation to gener-
ation, in the Church and in Christ Jesus, for ever and ever. Amen.**

SING: Lord hear my praying, listen to me - TIS 689

**Lord, hear my praying, listen to me;
you know there's evil in what I see.
I know I'm part of all that is wrong:
still, won't you hear my sorrowing song?**

**Children are crying, hungry for food,
sick from diseases — God, are you good?
People are homeless, lost and alone:
God, are you hiding? Where have you gone?**

**Why do the rich ones steal from the poor?
Why do they build their weapons of war?
How can you stand the torture and pain,
hope disappearing, freedom in chains?**

Jesus, remind us that you are found

**with those who cry, with those who are bound;
where there is suffering, you will be there -
help us to follow: Lord, hear my prayer.**

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The Sending Forth of the People of God

BLESSING

Whatever burdens you are carrying today, as you leave this place may you know that you are loved, that you are worthy and that you are a child of God.

And may the peace that passes all understanding be with you now and always. **Amen.**

SING: Take my gifts and let me love you - Alleluia Aotearoa 127

**Take my gifts and let me love you,
God who first of all loved me,
gave me light and food and shelter,
gave me life and set me free.
Now, because your love has touched me,
I have love to give away;
now the bread of love is rising,
loaves of love to multiply!**

**Take the fruit that I have gathered
from the tree your Spirit sowed,
harvest of your own compassion,
juice that makes the wine of God;
spiced with humour, laced with laughter –
flavour of the Jesus life,
tang of risk and new adventure,
taste and zest beyond belief.**

**Take whatever I can offer –
gifts that I have yet to find,
skills that I am slow to sharpen,
talents of the hand and mind,
things made beautiful for others
in the place where I must be:
take my gifts and let me love you,
God who first of all loved me.**

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